

Amphitrite, Neptune's wife, — generally represented as a beautiful nude nymph, crowned with seaweed, and reclining in a pearl-shell chariot drawn by dolphins, or sea-horses, — was worshiped with her husband.

Neptune, majestic and middle-aged, with long, flowing hair and beard, wearing a seaweed crown, and brandishing a trident, or three-pronged fork, was widely worshiped throughout Greece and Italy, and had countless shrines. His principal votaries were the seamen and horse trainers, who often bespoke his aid.

Worship of  
Neptune.

“Hail, Neptune, greatest of the gods!  
Thou ruler of the salt sea floods;  
Thou with the deep and dark-green hair,  
That dost the golden trident bear;  
Thou that, with either arm outspread,  
Embosomest the earth we tread:  
Thine are the beasts with fin and scales,  
That round thy chariot, as it sails,  
Plunging and tumbling, fast and free,  
All reckless follow o'er the sea.”

ARION.

Many large temples were dedicated exclusively to the worship of Neptune, and games were frequently celebrated in his honor. The most noted of all were undoubtedly the Isthmian Games, — a national festival, held every four years at Corinth, on the isthmus of the same name. Hither people came from all points of the compass, and all parts of the then known world, either to witness or to take part in the noted wrestling, boxing, and racing matches, or in the musical and poetical contests.

## CHAPTER XII.

PLUTO.

PLUTO (Dis, Hades, Plutus, Aïdoneus), son of Cronus and Rhea, received as his share of the world the supervision of the Infernal Regions, situated beneath the earth, and was also appointed god of the dead and of riches, for all precious metals are buried deep in the bosom of the earth.

“Blinded Plutus, didst thou dwell  
Nor in land nor fathomed sea,  
But only in the depths of hell, —  
God of riches! safe from thee  
Man himself might happy be.”

TIMOCREON OF RHODES.

This god inspired all men with a great fear. They never spoke of him without trembling, and fervently prayed that they might never see his face; for, when he appeared on the surface of the earth, it was only in search of some victim to drag down into his dismal abode, or to make sure there was no crevice through which a sunbeam might glide to brighten its gloom and dispel its shadows. Whenever the stern god set out on one of these expeditions, he rode in a chariot drawn by four coal-black steeds; and, if any obstacle presented itself to impede his progress, he struck it with his two-pronged fork, the emblem of his power, and the obstacle was immediately removed. It was on one of these occasions that Pluto kidnapped Proserpina, the fair goddess of vegetation, daughter of Ceres, whom he set on his throne in Hades, and crowned his queen (p. 183).

Pluto is always represented as a stern, dark, bearded man, with tightly closed lips, a crown on his head, a scepter and a key in hand, to show how carefully he guards those who enter his domains, and how vain are their hopes to effect their escape. No temples were dedicated to him, and statues of this god are very rare. Human sacrifices were sometimes offered on his altars; and at his festivals, held every hundred years, and thence called *Secular Games*, none but black animals were slain.

His kingdom, generally called *Hades*, was very difficult of access. According to Roman traditions, it could only be entered at *Avernus*, but the Greeks asserted that there was another entrance near the Promontory of *Tænaron*. Both nations agreed, however, in saying that it was an almost impossible feat to get out again if one were rash enough to venture in.

“To the shades you go a down-hill, easy way;  
But to return and re-enjoy the day,  
This is a work, a labor!”

VIRGIL.

To prevent all mortals from entering, and all spirits from escaping, Pluto placed a huge three-headed dog, called *Cerberus*, to guard the gate.

“There in state old *Cerberus* sate,  
A three-headed dog, as cruel as *Fate*,  
Guarding the entrance early and late.”

SAXE.

From thence a long subterranean passage, through which shadowy spirits glided incessantly, led to the throne room, where Pluto and *Proserpina* sat in state, clad in their sable robes. From the foot of this throne flowed the rivers which channeled the *Lower World*. One, the *Cocytus*, rolled salt waves, composed of naught but the tears flowing continually from the eyes of the

criminals condemned to hard labor in *Tartarus*, the portion of *Hades* reserved for the exclusive use of the wicked.

“*Cocytus*, named of lamentation loud  
Heard on the rueful stream.”

HOMER.

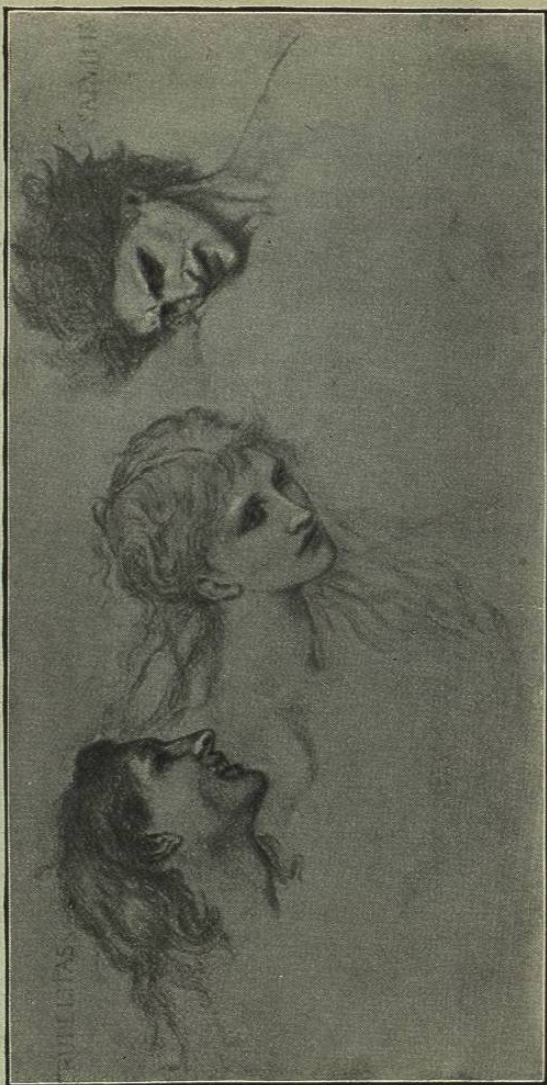
To separate this section from the remainder of his realm, Pluto surrounded it with the *Phlegethon*, a river of fire; while the *Acheron*, a black and deep stream, was to be passed by all souls ere they reached Pluto's throne and heard his decree. The current of this river was so swift, that even the boldest swimmer could not pass over; and, as there was no bridge, all the spirits were obliged to rely upon the aid of *Charon*, an aged boatman, who plied the only available skiff—a leaky, worm-eaten punt—from shore to shore. Neither would he allow any soul to enter his bark, unless he was first given a small coin, called the *obolus*, the ferryman's fare, which the ancients carefully laid under the tongue of the dead, that they might pass on to Pluto without delay. *Charon's* leaky boat no sooner touched the shore than a host of eager spirits pressed forward to claim a place. The cruel boatman repulsed them roughly, and brandished his oars, while he leisurely selected those he would next ferry across the stream.

“The shiv'ring army stands,  
And press for passage with extended hands.  
Now these, now those, the surly boatman bore;  
The rest he drove to distance from the shore.”

VIRGIL (Dryden's tr.).

All those who could not produce the required *obolus* were obliged to wait one hundred years, at the end of which time *Charon* reluctantly ferried them over free of charge.

There was also in *Hades* the sacred river *Styx*, by whose waters the gods swore their most irrevocable oaths; and the blessed *Lethe*, whose waters had the power to make one forget all unpleasant things, thus preparing the good for a state of endless bliss in the *Elysian Fields*.



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THE FURIES.—A Study for the Masque of Cupid.—Burne-Jones.

“Lethe, the river of oblivion, rolls  
Her wat’ry labrinth, whereof who drinks,  
Forthwith his former state and being forgets,  
Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain.”

MILTON.

Near Pluto’s throne were seated the three judges of Hades, Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Æacus, whose duty it was to question all newly arrived souls, to sort out the confused mass of good and bad thoughts and actions, and place them in the scales of Themis, the blindfolded, impartial goddess of justice, who bore a trenchant sword to indicate that her decrees would be mercilessly enforced. If the good outweighed the evil, the spirit was led to the Elysian Fields; but if, on the contrary, the evil prevailed, the spirit was condemned to suffer in the fires of Tartarus.

The judges.

“Where his decrees  
The guilty soul within the burning gates  
Of Tartarus compel, or send the good  
To inhabit, with eternal health and peace,  
The valley of Elysium.”

AKENSIDE.

The guilty souls were always intrusted to the three snake-locked Furies (Erinnyes, or Eumenides), who drove them with their stinging lashes to the gates of Tartarus. These deities, who were sisters, and children of Acheron and Nyx, were distinguished by the individual names of Alecto, Tisiphone, and Megæra, and with Nemesis, goddess of revenge, were noted for their hard hearts and the merciless manner in which they hurried the ghosts intrusted to their care over the fiery flood of the Phlegethon, and through the brazen gates of their future place of incessant torment.

The Furies.

“There rolls swift Phlegethon, with thund’ring sound,  
His broken rocks, and whirls his surges round.  
On mighty columns rais’d sublime are hung  
The massy gates, impenetrably strong.



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THE THREE FATES.—Thumann.

In vain would men, in vain would gods essay,  
To hew the beams of adamant away.  
Here rose an iron tow'r: before the gate,  
By night and day, a wakeful Fury sate,  
The pale Tisiphone; a robe she wore,  
With all the pomp of horror, dy'd in gore."

VIRGIL (C. Pitt's tr.).

The three Fates (Mœræ, Parcæ), sisters, also sat near Pluto's throne. Clotho, the youngest, spun the thread of life, in which the bright and dark lines were intermingled. Lachesis, the second, twisted it; and under her fingers it was now strong, now weak.

The Fates.

"Twist ye, twine ye! even so,  
Mingle shades of joy and woe,  
Hope, and fear, and peace, and strife,  
In the thread of human life."

SCOTT.

Atropos, the third sister, armed with a huge pair of shears, remorselessly cut short the thread of life,—an intimation that another soul would ere long find its way down into the dark kingdom of Hades.

When the gates of Tartarus turned on their hinges to receive the newcomer, a chorus of cries, groans, and imprecations from within fell upon his ear, mingled with the whistling of the whips incessantly plied by retributive deities.

Tartarus.

"What sounds were heard,  
What scenes appeared,  
O'er all the dreary coasts!  
Dreadful gleams,  
Dismal screams,  
Fires that glow,  
Shrieks of woe,  
Sullen moans,  
Hollow groans,  
And cries of tortured ghosts."

ADDISON.

Many victims renowned while on earth for their cruelty found here the just punishment of their sins. Attention was first attracted by a group of beautiful maidens, who carried water to fill a bottomless cask. Down to the stream they hastened, a long procession, filled their urns with water, painfully clambered up the steep and slippery bank, and poured their water into the cask; but when, exhausted and ready to faint from fatigue, they paused to rest for a moment, the cutting lash fell upon their bare shoulders, and spurred them on to renewed efforts to complete a task so hopeless that it has become proverbial.

These fair maidens were the Danaides, daughters of Danaus, who had pledged his fifty daughters to the fifty sons of his brother Ægyptus. The marriage preparations were all completed, when Danaus suddenly remembered an ancient prophecy which had quite escaped his memory, and which foretold that he would perish by the hand of his son-in-law.

It was now too late to prevent the marriages, so, calling his daughters aside, he told them what the oracle had said, and, giving them each a sharp dagger, bade them slay their husbands on their wedding night. The marriages were celebrated, as was customary, with mirth, dance, and song; and the revelry continued until late at night, when, the guests having departed, the newly married couples retired. But as soon as Danaus' daughters were quite certain their husbands were fast asleep, they produced their daggers and slew their mates.

"Danaus arm'd each daughter's hand  
To stain with blood the bridal bed."

EURIPIDES (Potter's tr.).

One of the brides only, Hypermnestra, loved her husband too dearly to obey her father's command, and, when morning broke, only forty-nine of Ægyptus' sons were found lifeless. The sole survivor, Lynceus, to avenge his brothers' death, slew Danaus, thus fulfilling the ominous prophecy; while the gods, incensed

by the Danaides' heartlessness, sent them to Hades, where they were compelled to fill the bottomless cask.

Tartarus also detained within its brazen portals a cruel king named Tantalus (the father of Niobe), who, while on earth, had starved and ill-treated his subjects, insulted the immortal gods, and on one occasion had even dared to cook and serve up to them his own son Pelops. Most of the gods were immediately aware of the deception practiced upon them, and refused the new dish; but Ceres, who was very melancholy on account of the recent loss of her daughter, paid no heed to what was offered her, and in a fit of absent-mindedness ate part of the lad's shoulder.

The gods in pity restored the youth to life, and Ceres replaced the missing shoulder with one of ivory or of gold. Driven away from his kingdom, which was seized by the King of Troy, Pelops took refuge in Greece, where he ruled the extensive peninsula, the Peloponnesus, which still bears his name.

To punish the inhuman Tantalus, the gods then sent him to Tartarus, where he stood up to his chin in a stream of pure water, tormented with thirst; for, whenever he stooped to drink, the waters fled from his parched lips. Over his head hung a branch of luscious fruit. His hunger was as intolerable as his thirst; but, whenever he clutched at the fruit, the branch swung upward, and eluded his eager grasp.

"Above, beneath, around his hapless head,  
Trees of all kinds delicious fruitage spread.  
The fruit he strives to seize; but blasts arise,  
Toss it on high, and whirl it to the skies."

HOMER (Pope's tr.).

This singular punishment inflicted upon Tantalus gave rise to the expression "to tantalize."

Another criminal was Sisyphus, who, while king of Corinth, had misused his power, had robbed and killed travelers, and even deceived the gods. His reprehensible conduct was punished in Tartarus, where he was condemned

Sisyphus.

to roll a huge stone to the top of a very steep hill; and just as he reached the summit, and fancied his task done, the rock would slip from his grasp and roll to the foot of the hill, thus obliging him to renew all his exertions.

“With many a weary step, and many a groan,  
Up the high hill he heaves a huge round stone;  
The huge round stone, resulting with a bound,  
Thunders impetuous down, and smokes along the ground.  
Again the restless orb his toil renews,  
Dust mounts in clouds, and sweat descends in dews.”

HOMER (Pope's tr.).

Salmeoneus, another king, had vainly tried to make his subjects believe he was Jupiter. To that effect, he had once driven over a brazen bridge to imitate the roll of thunder, and, **Salmeoneus.** to simulate the thunderbolts, had thrown lighted torches down upon the multitude, purposely assembled below.

“Th' audacious wretch four fiery coursers drew:  
He wav'd a torch aloft, and, madly vain,  
Sought godlike worship from a servile train.  
Ambitious fool, with horny hoofs to pass  
O'er hollow arches of resounding brass,  
To rival thunder in its rapid course,  
And imitate inimitable force!”

VIRGIL (Dryden's tr.).

This insolent parody so incensed Jupiter, that he grasped one of his deadliest thunderbolts, brandished it aloft for a moment, and then hurled it with vindictive force at the arrogant king. In Tartarus, Salmeoneus was placed beneath an overhanging rock, which momentarily threatened to fall, and crush him under its mass.

“He was doomed to sit under a huge stone,  
Which the father of the gods  
Kept over his head suspended.  
Thus he sat  
In continual dread of its downfall,  
And lost to every comfort.”

PINDAR.

Still farther on was the recumbent form of Tityus, a giant whose body covered nine acres of ground. He had **Tityus.** dared offer an insult to Juno, and in punishment was chained like Prometheus, while a vulture feasted on his liver.

“There Tityus was to see, who took his birth  
From heav'n, his nursing from the foodful earth:  
Here his gigantic limbs, with large embrace,  
Infold nine acres of infernal space.  
A rav'nous vulture in his open side  
Her crooked beak and cruel talons try'd:  
Still for the growing liver digg'd his breast,  
The growing liver still supply'd the feast.”

VIRGIL (Dryden's tr.).

Here in Tartarus, too, was Ixion, king of the Lapithæ, who had been given the hand of Dia in marriage on condition that he would give her father a stipulated sum of money **Ixion.** in exchange, but who, as soon as the maiden was his, refused to keep his promise. The father-in-law was an avaricious man, and clamored so loudly for his money, that Ixion, to be rid of his importunities, slew him. Such an act of violence could not be overlooked by the gods: so Jupiter summoned Ixion to appear before him and state his case.

Ixion pleaded so skillfully, that Jupiter was about to declare him acquitted, when he suddenly caught him making love to Juno, which offense seemed so unpardonable, that he sent him to Tartarus, where he was bound to a constantly revolving wheel of fire.

“Proud Ixion (doom'd to feel  
The tortures of the eternal wheel,  
Bound by the hand of angry Jove)  
Received the due rewards of impious love.”

SOPHOCLES (Francklin's tr.).

Far out of sight and hearing of the pitiful sounds which so constantly rose out of Tartarus, were the Elysian Fields, lighted

by a sun and moon of their own, decked with the most fragrant and beautiful of flowers, and provided with every charm that nature or art could supply. No storms or wintry winds ever came to rob these fields of their spring-like beauty; and here the blessed spent eternity, in pleasant communion with the friends they had loved on earth.

Elysian Fields.

“Patriots who perished for their country’s rights,  
Or nobly triumphed in the fields of fight:  
There holy priests and sacred poets stood,  
Who sang with all the raptures of a god:  
Worthies whose lives by useful arts refined;  
With those who leave a deathless name behind,  
Friends of the world, and fathers of mankind.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

## BACCHUS.

AMONG all the mortal maidens honored by the love of Jupiter, king of the gods, none was more attractive than Semele, daughter of Cadmus and Harmonia.

“For Semele was molded in the form  
Of elegance; the beauty of her race  
Shone in her forehead.”

NONNUS (Elton’s tr.).

Although conscious of these superior attractions, Semele was excessively coy, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that Jupiter, disguised as a mortal, could urge his love suit. When he had at last obtained a hearing, he told her who he was, calculating upon the effect which such a revelation must necessarily produce.

Story of  
Semele.

He was not mistaken in his previsions, for Semele, proud of having attracted the greatest among the gods, no longer offered any resistance, and consented to their union. Their love grew and prospered, and Jupiter came down from Olympus as often as possible to enjoy the society of his beloved. His frequent absences finally aroused Juno’s suspicions, and, as usual, she spared no pains to discover what powerful charm could draw him from her side. After a few days she knew all, and straightway determined to have her revenge, and punish her fickle spouse. To accomplish this successfully, she assumed the face and form of Beroe, Semele’s old nurse, and thus entered the young princess’s apartment quite unsuspected.